



USAID/Afghanistan Strategy

OVERVIEW

Nearly twenty-five years of war and violence devastated Afghanistan's polity, economy, and society. In 2001, when the Taliban was forced out of power, half of Afghanistan's people lived in absolute poverty, and virtually all of the country's institutions and much of its infrastructure were destroyed. To rebuild the country and combat terrorism, USAID is working to create economic growth, effective and representative governance, and the human capital base needed to eliminate the conditions that breed extremism.

USAID ASSISTANCE

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Functioning transportation and electricity networks are essential for economic growth. Roads connect farmers to markets, provide access to health facilities, and facilitate regional trade. Road construction has been a major reconstruction priority. As of spring 2008, USAID completed rehabilitation of more than 2,700 km of both paved and un-paved roads, resulting in increased mobility, trade, and security.

Access to reliable, affordable power is critical to building a vibrant private sector, yet less than 10 percent of Afghans have access to electricity. USAID is working to remedy this situation by supporting the North East Power System, a multi-donor initiative that will provide expanded access to reliable, low-cost electricity. USAID is also improving thermal electrical generation facilities for major cities, including Kabul, and rehabilitating the Kajaki Dam, the principal source of electricity in southern Afghanistan.

USAID economic growth programs assist Afghanistan's businesses with credit, training, and other support services. Land titling and property rights are being strengthened, while moribund state-owned enterprises are being privatized. These activities generate investment, strengthen businesses, and create job opportunities. USAID also works with the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to increase revenue collection, improve the legal and regulatory framework to increase private sector investment, and build the government's capacity to manage the economy.

Rebuilding Afghanistan's legal rural economy is an important contributor to economic growth. The estimated 80 percent of Afghans earning their living through farming need increased opportunities both on and off the farm. USAID's work on Afghanistan's irrigation systems has improved irrigation for nearly 10 percent of arable land and improved the health of millions of livestock. USAID is helping Afghanistan develop a market-driven agricultural sector by improving linkages between suppliers, producers and markets, and providing farmers with improved farm technologies and increased access to financial services.

USAID is creating licit alternatives to poppy production by promoting and accelerating rural economic development. Through increasing commercial agriculture opportunities, improving agricultural productivity, and creating rural employment, we improve family incomes and well being, thus reducing pressures on the poor to grow opium poppy.

To accelerate sustainable economic development in regions most affected by poppy production, USAID provides materials, technology, and expertise necessary to produce and market high-value licit crops such as fruits, vegetables, and tree crops. The program also dedicates significant resources to providing sources of credit, developing new markets, improving infrastructure, and removing administrative constraints that hinder business growth.

GOVERNING JUSTLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY

Afghanistan has made significant strides towards democracy since the fall of the Taliban. In five years, the country has drafted a new constitution and democratically elected a president, National Assembly, and provincial councils. Going forward, USAID support will focus on building the capacity of democratic institutions to strengthen governance and civil society, and improve the management of human resources, financial resources, and service delivery of priority national ministries and municipalities.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE: HEALTH AND EDUCATION

In 2002, when schools reopened, 97 percent of girls did not attend school. By the end of Taliban rule, 80 percent of schools were severely damaged or destroyed. To improve the situation, USAID constructed or refurbished over 680 schools and distributed more

than 60 million textbooks. USAID created an accelerated learning program that enrolled over 170,000 students, more than half of whom were girls, and provided learning materials. Today, USAID supports more than 45,000 students in community-based education classes in areas where there is no access to formal schools, and implements the Ministry of Education's teacher training program in 11 provinces, supporting more than 50,000 teachers in the formal school system. As a result of the efforts by the Afghan Government, the U.S., and other donors, today more than 5.7 million students are in school, 35% of whom are girls.

The health status of Afghans is among the worst in the world – one out of every five Afghan children dies before the age of five. To provide Afghans with access to basic health services, USAID has constructed or refurbished over 670 clinics throughout the country, established over 360 health facilities providing basic health services, including the provision of all medicines and expendable supplies. USAID has also trained over 1,000 midwives to work in hospitals and clinics throughout the country, making deliveries safer for women and helping reduce infant mortality.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are civil-military organizations that are designed to improve security, extend the reach of the Afghan government, and facilitate reconstruction in priority provinces. Their core objective is to implement projects that will improve stability so that more traditional forms of development assistance can resume. USAID's programs work with PRTs to deliver services in less secure or underserved areas of Afghanistan. As USAID's primary representative in the provinces, field program officers monitor all U.S. reconstruction and development efforts in the area of responsibility of the PRT and implement PRT-specific programming. They work to build relationships with local leaders, identify local needs, and report on significant developments.

CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

USAID directly supports the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and a number of cross-cutting activities such as gender programs, training, and the development of information technology.

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